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ABSTRACT

The thought of shared leadership offers teachers a vision of more control of central issues of concern, opportunities for significant decision making, and the development of a more democratic environment. This paper presents an account of the success and frustrations encountered by an elementary school throughout an 18-month period of school-based management implementation. An ethnographic indepth study of a single school site was conducted. Data were gathered by the facilitator/researcher who played the role of participant observer. The following concerns were addressed: (1) to what extent would teachers be empowered? (2) how would teachers react to greater opportunities for decision making? (3) what additional decisions would teachers be allowed to make? (4) what are the perceived successful aspects of school-based management? (5) what the perceived roadblocks that arose during implementation? and (6) how would students' academic lives be enhanced as a result of this governance change? The main body of the document discusses the following themes identified as salient by the study: (1) the issue of trust, (2) questioning the value of commitment and collaboration, (3) confusion of roles and responsibilities, (4) the challenge of focusing on student needs, (5) administrative expectations and limitations, and (6) the establishment of open communication. (Contains 18 references.) (LL)

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EXPERIENCING SHARED LEADERSHIP: TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

paper presented at the annual meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
in New Orleans, April 1994

by

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Often heard among parental discussions about their children is the question, "Do you think your child is a leader or a follower?" The response seems to have an impact upon parents who may admire their child's ability to lead others and to make important decisions. Discussions around the coffee machine at major companies revolve around the projected future leadership positions to which each young professional aspires. Employees understand the important responsibilities and authority that they will have once they obtain that promotion.

In reminiscing about several teaching experiences throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it has occurred to me that being considered a leader as a teacher is perhaps a rare thought among teachers. Ask the question of the role of the teacher as a leader to preservice teachers and the room becomes mute with many blank stares. Inservice teachers seldom, if ever, discuss their aspirations for leadership positions, except for the few who desire to become principals. *Leader* is a word that is rarely used in discussions among educational personnel, and, yet, those in the field of teaching refer to it as a *profession*. Devoid of significant leadership roles exclusive of administrative positions, teachers do not traditionally consider their role or responsibility in making decisions concerning school-wide managerial or operational factors. The leaders in education--the administrators--are responsible for most, if not all, of the critical decisions that may directly affect the daily lives of both teachers and students. The mere thought of professionals not having considerable input concerning critical issues and decisions that occur each day seems somewhat absurd.

The late 1980s brought schools the many faces of school-based management, and with it the chance for some schools to begin to empower

teachers with decision-making opportunities that would reflect the types of decisions with which professionals would be involved. As one of the latest and most popular bandwagons for reforming public education, school-based management has several names: *site-based management, shared leadership,* and *shared decision making. School-based management* serves as the most appropriate descriptor to represent the various aspects of this current reform movement. As teachers grapple with the renewed responsibilities and roles promised through school-based management, one must inquire which proposals are indeed beneficial to them and, ultimately, to their students' needs.

Many educational theorists and researchers have decided that schools can best improve themselves through in-house governance and school-site control over such issues as budgetary concerns, curricular decisions, and other policies. Based on organizational and leadership theory and concepts of collegiality and professionalism, qualities of school-based management may indeed recast the role of those on the front lines of education--teachers--into roles that allow them to become an integral part of determining policies that will be implemented in developing successful learning environments for students. Because previous reform efforts have not enabled teachers to add their voices to proposed solutions for the improvement of schooling, school-based management provides an avenue for change based on teachers' views and beliefs.

As schools across America adopt some form of school-based management, many do so with individualized designed plans that specifically meet the needs of their school; a key tenet to the principle. Fullan and Miles (1992) support the view of site-specific change with this comment "there can

be no blueprints for change" that would transfer from one school to another (p.749). Individually designed programs provide an opportunity for schools to avoid what Barth (1990) called *list logic,* the idea that if school systems follow another school's model of perfection, they, too, will become an effective educational institution.

Watching with great interest are teachers, administrators, parents, and the university community pondering the following questions: Will there be an impact on the improvement of the learning community within each school? Will the changes proposed and implemented by teachers' decisions within each school actually have an impact on students' needs? Will students acquire the desired outcomes more readily as a result of school-based management?

The perceptions of teachers are critical as schools adopt alternate forms of school governance. The process of examining the issues faced by teachers may provide other schools with successful guidelines for facilitating the change. Conley (1991) suggested that field-based studies that examine the details of school decision making are necessary to understanding how the process can be improved. As a facilitator of the implementation of a school-based management plan, I was drawn into an elementary school as the faculty began its journey with the proposed change in governance. My original intent was merely to assist the school in the change process. My continued engagement with the leadership team, however, encouraged me to examine the process in greater depth. What follows is an account of the successes and frustrations that the faculty of Valley Elementary School encountered throughout an eighteen month period of school-based management implementation.

As I accepted the role of a researcher, I was searching for answers to the following concerns:

1. *To what extent would teachers be empowered?*
2. *How would teachers react to greater opportunities for decision making?*
3. *What additional decisions, if any, would teachers be allowed to make?*
4. *What are the perceived successful aspects of school-based management?*
5. *What are the perceived roadblocks that have arisen during the implementation of school-based management?*
6. *How would students' academic lives be enhanced as a result of this governance change?*

My interest in becoming a facilitator for the school-based management project was grounded in my belief and bias that schools would become better places for students and teachers if teachers were genuinely provided more opportunities for key decision-making, that is, decisions concerning instructional and curricular issues, evaluation policies, or grouping practices. Research supports the thought that with more decision-making opportunities, teachers' morale and productivity improve (Johnston & Germinario, 1985). The traditional opportunities for decision making afforded teachers have done little to advance the professionalism of teachers, or to involve teachers in critical educational concerns. As Valley Elementary School implemented school-based management, my intent in studying the experience was to determine which particular aspects of the process were

beneficial to making progress toward greater teacher involvement and which aspects of the process could be improved if other schools choose to initiate similar school-based management practices.

Methods of Inquiry and Procedures

Ethnography is the method of research chosen to investigate the implementation of school-based management at Valley Elementary School. Educational ethnography can be characterized by frequent visits and in-depth study of a single school site. Qualitative studies, such as this, are general and more interpretive and narrative than quantitative analyses. Their purpose is ". . . to highlight, to explain, to provide directions the reader can take into account" (Eisner, 1991, p. 59).

I played the role of a *participant observer* in attending small group and school-wide meetings to assist in the initiation of school-based management (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Additionally, I conducted both formal and informal interviews with faculty throughout the facilitative process. Formal interviews were conducted with teachers who volunteered (four total) and the principal. I was concerned with multiple perceptions--those of teachers, the principal, and my own--as I corroborated on many occasions with these parties as both a participant and an observer in the governance change.

Following meetings with the leadership team, I scripted field notes as I did during monthly faculty meetings. I also took notes following informal discussions with members of the leadership team and the principal. Triangulation of data was established through designing a nonscheduled interview guide and initiating formal interviews with four faculty members and the principal (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). The interview guide questions

were based on previous research studies and personally developed questions that arose as I continued to study the change process. Each interview lasted for approximately an hour.

Considering my bias on the topic of shared leadership, I chose to interview teachers through both formal and informal means to provide other voices to arrive at the thick description that characterizes qualitative studies. Regarding bias, Eisner (1991) indicated that in qualitative studies, ". . . judgment is alive and well, and hence the arena for debate and difference is always open" p. 39. Through understanding the subjectivity of the researcher in qualitative studies, it becomes clear that it is not my intent to generalize the findings of this study to the changes that have occurred in other shared leadership schools. The intent instead is to provide information concerning the process of implementing various aspects of school-based leadership, and with this knowledge, encourage other schools to adopt successful strategies as they experience the change process.

Theoretical Framework

The major theoretical perspective for the study is that of *conflict theory* (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As a participant observer, I encountered organizational and personal dynamics that created conflict for the faculty regarding the beliefs they held concerning their roles and responsibilities as teachers. One of the underlying assumptions in conflict theory is that "conflict and change are normal forces within societal systems and contribute to their health and adaptation" (LeCompte & Preissle, p. 129). This study addresses the challenges that the faculty at Valley Elementary School experienced as they encountered conflict in accepting new roles and adapted

to the changes that developed as a result of the implementation of school-based management.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began as I read through the many field notes that had been taken throughout the year and a half of the project. Notes included comments taken during faculty meetings, following leadership team meetings, and after informal meetings with the principal and members of the leadership team. Added to the field notes were documents collected from the school including goal statements as designed by the faculty, personal value statements from faculty members, policy decisions from central level administration, and action plans derived from goal statements. The final data examined were comments recorded by hand from the nonscheduled interviews held with four faculty members and the principal.

After reading through the data, I used the constant comparative method for analysis. This involves the activities of sorting, selecting, rearranging, comparing, and contrasting the data in search of themes or core variables. Following this analysis process, I identified central and common themes to report as findings.

Definitions

Because of the multitude of terms that have been used to describe changes in governance within schools, it may be advantageous to explain these terms as they are used within the context of the study.

School-based management is a system of providing individual school personnel opportunities for greater control over issues such as budgetary

matters, instructional practices, and curricular decisions that have previously been the domain of central office administrators. In a school-based model of management these opportunities may be primarily offered only to principals or may allow teachers to become more involved also in these decisions.

Shared leadership indicates a shift in the traditional leadership roles played by principals and teachers. Teachers are allocated greater responsibilities and power in critical decisions affecting the school. It is a process in which all members of a faculty may collaborate in defining goals, formulating policy, and implementing programs to enhance school effectiveness. Shared leadership may encompass the following characteristics:

empowering faculty
developing a shared mission
more open communication
clearly stated roles
working collaboratively
establishing common goals
sharing decision-making
sharing of expectations
developing shared values
identifying common purpose

Conley (1991) stated the importance of distinguishing between two types of leadership participation models when reporting on the aims of school-based leadership: the *professional model* which focuses on the ". . . professional discretion and expertise of teachers in diagnosing and addressing student learning needs" and the *bureaucratic model* which ". . . emphasizes the formal authority of administrators to delegate responsibilities to subordinates . . . and implement centralized control, planning, and decision making" (p. 228). Valley Elementary School, initially, appeared to be operating under the auspices of the professional model, although some of the teachers viewed the aims of participation by the administration suspiciously indicating

questions concerning the possibility of implementing characteristics of the professional model.

Description of the Setting

The School Site

Valley Elementary School (pseudonym) was one of fifteen schools in a system twenty miles west of Philadelphia which voluntarily attended a one week training session in January of 1992 by university personnel on school-based management. Three teachers and the principal were chosen to represent the school as the leadership team and attend the training session. During this week, I was assigned the role of facilitator for Valley School and continued to consult with members of the leadership team following the training session.

Valley School is an elementary school with grades kindergarten through five and a total faculty of approximately 30 teachers. The members of the leadership team were a kindergarten teacher, a third grade teacher, the reading specialist, and the principal. This was the school's first attempt at any kind of school-based management practice.

The training consisted of six components: identifying personality characteristics, developing effective team building strategies, identifying effective leadership strategies, reaching consensus, identifying methods for developing shared goals, and developing an action plan to implement shared leadership with the entire school faculty.

The leadership team meeting of the three teachers and the principal in February was the first of many I attended throughout the next eighteen months. It began as a request to assist the team in implementing the site-based management strategies that they had learned from the training session.

From my view, the four team members were committed to involving the entire faculty in a comprehensive shared leadership environment. In that first meeting, their concerns centered around how they could most appropriately involve the entire faculty in establishing a shared mission, goals, and action plans that would lead to an improved school. It was clear to me that none of the team members was interested in usurping power for her own agendas. Their goal was to empower the entire faculty in the sense of the professional model as mentioned earlier. What follows is a description of the themes that both plagued the process of reaching desired goals and factors that contributed to progress toward a successful school-based management system.

Findings

The Issue of Trust

None of the planned goals would be reached without first creating an atmosphere of trust among the faculty--a situation that no training would have explained well enough. The challenge for the leadership team was to patch together the previously torn pieces of group dynamics within the school and to attempt to create some faith in the possibilities for greater leadership and decision making.

Initial trust issues arose as a result of the method used to establish a leadership team. The team was not chosen through elections by the faculty. These three teachers were appointed by the principal--without the entire faculty's awareness or approval. The issue at hand: the principal had chosen three teachers to represent the school without approval of the faculty nor consideration of other teachers who believed themselves to be as, if not more,

qualified. Shared leadership at Valley Elementary School was off to a tenuous beginning. The principal made no attempt to justify the reasons for choosing the three teachers that comprised the leadership team.

Throughout various steps of the process, it became evident through some teacher comments and actions that there was little reason to become involved with this idea of school-based management. Trusting administrators to allow teachers to become involved with organizational and operational school-wide decisions was too much for some teachers to believe. Some teachers openly admitted that the idea of school-based management would be a short-lived experience much like prior educational trends such as open education. Another added dimension creating a low level of trust was the knowledge that the principal would soon be retiring, and her support for the changes taking place within the structure of the process would disappear when a new principal was employed. Formal interviews with teachers reflected the challenges of creating an atmosphere of trust. Mentioned was mistrust in central administration personnel as well as the belief that the administrators had no trust in them as professionals. Views such as these prevented teachers from becoming full partners in the process and led to commitment concerns.

Questioning the Value of Commitment and Collaboration

Valley Elementary School, through the efforts of the leadership team, had developed the processes and action plans to implement changes in certain aspects of the school's organizational structure. Four groups of faculty members were formed to develop policies to reach each goal. Within these work groups, one group failed to meet the expectations of the leadership team

for planning their presentation to the faculty. The team viewed that group's lack of action as a failure to commit to the process of improving the school environment.

As faculty discussed priority issues at meetings, inquiries arose concerning the level of commitment that each would accept for implementing aspects of the agreed-upon goals. New discipline policies were established and a couple of teachers asked who would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policies. Two questions asked were "Who will police us if we decide not to adhere to these new policies?" and "How do we assure accountability?" One teacher indicated that she would not follow new policies without being policed by the principal. One of the leadership team members made it clear that it was not the team's responsibility to administer the action plans, but instead the responsibility of the entire faculty to abide by consensus decisions. The principal responded "It is the responsibility of the principal to see to it that each and every faculty member is carrying the load. We are a team--like a husband and wife--you must help with the dusting." The words, themselves, do not assure that teachers will be willing to collaborate in implementing the agreed-upon plans.

The leadership team and other faculty members were concerned that their action plans would not be accepted by central office administration. Linked to the issue of trust, teachers did not believe that central office administrators would accept their suggestions for improvement, which threatened their level of commitment. No explicit signs emanated from the superintendent's office that established school-site policies would be supported in any fashion. All of the teachers that were formally interviewed

mentioned the need to attain greater teacher support and commitment towards the process in order to have it succeed.

Confusion of Roles and Responsibilities

Although the leadership team appeared within their meetings to possess a clear understanding of their role within the school-based management plan, the picture for teachers was much less detailed. Issues such as what types of decision-making opportunities would teachers have; would the decisions reached be implemented with full administrative support; which specific decisions would teachers be allowed to make, that is, would there be opportunities to determine or alter curricular and instructional issues, grouping practices, evaluation policies, budgetary concerns, or approve newly hired teachers; and, would implementation of action plans occur without principal approval. Of critical concern was the question, would teachers have authority in decision making or merely influence decisions that would ultimately be left to administrators?

Mentioned in introductory comments is the belief that the leadership team, including the principal, fully expected to exercise an organizational design of leadership described as the professional model--a setting in which teachers are accorded the authority of professional decision makers. The leadership team carefully constructed activities for faculty that placed primary responsibility for school progress upon their shoulders. Specifically, teachers were invited to reveal beliefs and values, use these to develop a mission statement that was constructed using consensus among the faculty, develop priorities for future goals, and establish action plans for implementation of goals.

Within faculty meetings, teachers voiced their concerns with comments such as, "We need support from the administration. We might have consensus here, but we don't have any control over things." That comment appeared to place doubt in the minds of some of the teachers as to the authority associated with any of their decisions. As mentioned earlier, some teachers were interested in discerning whose role it was to assure that newly established policies would be followed, that is, would the principal or the leadership team police their actions, or would teachers follow the policies based on a system much like an honor code? These questions indicate that some of the teachers were operating under the thought process associated with *relative participation* throughout the school-based management plan. In this view of participation, teachers perceive their opportunities for participation in pertinent decision-making processes as relative to the amount of influence they had prior to the beginning of this process which was perceived by teachers as minimal (Alutto & Belasco, 1972). When this attitude is present, teachers experience role conflict and are not as likely to support the process of change (Conley, 1991). Teachers could justify this belief due to a statement released by the superintendent within the first year of the project that teachers would not be entitled to make any decisions concerning curricular or instructional issues.

Perhaps faith in their ability to have an impact on critical operational decisions occurred when the Valley faculty heard that one of the other elementary schools in the system had approved alternate policies for kindergarten attendance. The Valley teachers, upon hearing this, were immediately curious about their ability to alter or control an issue as important as this was perceived to be. Following considerable work on goal

statements and actions plans, the question of deciding how to group students for mathematics arose at a faculty meeting. Grouping students was an issue that had primarily been controlled and dictated from central administrative personnel. It was an issue that was highly pertinent to these teachers. Following contact with central administrators, a member of the leadership team announced that teachers could decide how students would be grouped for mathematics. This may have raised the expectations of authority for the teachers, but, in turn, created more role confusion.

None of the teachers interviewed in the formal interview process believed that her autonomy had been enhanced to allow greater control over key issues. Issues such as testing and curriculum were mentioned as factors over which teachers desired decision-making opportunities but were not afforded. Despite the altruistic interests of the leadership team in empowering the faculty, many teachers viewed their role in this process as one that is synonymous with the bureaucratic model of leadership--a design in which centralized control, planning, and decision making is in the hands of administrators. That sentiment placed considerable strain on progress toward establishing action plans. The teachers interviewed mentioned their frustration with the inability of the central office to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the faculty in a shared leadership situation.

The Challenge of Focusing on Student Needs

The leadership team presented several opportunities for the faculty to become personally and professionally involved with the leadership process. Among the activities designed for faculty was one which would allow the faculty to suggest needed changes to improve the schooling process. Teachers

were provided with this open-ended sentence: *It would help me with my job if . . . .* The answers could not be categorized into units of improvement by the leadership team due to the variations among the responses. Some of the responses included, *students were easier to motivate, I was always sure of what was expected of me, people wouldn't say, "I don't care I'm not doing it," people would lighten up,* and *I wish parents would spend 20-40 minutes a day with their child.* The leadership team believed that many of the teachers were focusing on personal concerns that had no relevance to the growth of the school--neither teacher nor student growth.

Another set of data collected by the team were comments placed on "magic beans"--in essence, two five-by-eight cards on which each teacher placed his/her goals for the school. Among some of the needs listed were, *teamwork and cooperation, good communication among staff, more positive and assertive discipline, clearly defined discipline policy, academic success for all students, more sharing of ideas among faculty.* This list was more satisfying for the leadership team and provided the team with more direction. The second list enabled the faculty at Valley to collaboratively develop a mission statement. The leadership team was pleased with the results and agreed that it met their needs for further growth for the faculty through the development of a set of prioritized goal statements.

The following list of goals were established approximately six months after initiating the school-based leadership plan:

1) *Academic growth and success for all (with a focus on improving student growth in mathematics and reading).*
2) *Shared responsibility (for effective discipline and positive attitudes among staff).*

3) *Improved Communication (especially written communication from the principal--dated).*

4) *Effective leadership (clearly stated responsibilities for all).*

The leadership team informed me that they were not particularly impressed with the goals. One member of the team stated that she thought the plans were focused only on the needs of the faculty as adults. The concern was that these goals did not essentially touch the lives of the students, meaningfully, in any way. One member of the team stated, "These are petty concerns compared to the needs of our students." She was not alone among the team members in her thinking, as the principal, also, felt the goals were somewhat short-sighted when it came to the needs of the students. For eight months the faculty developed action plans to accompany the established goals, and meetings with the leadership team throughout this period consistently yielded their frustration with plans that eliminated student needs.

The issue was inadvertently addressed when a teacher commented at a faculty meeting, "If we can't agree on issues like assemblies, then what will happen when we get to issues like academic excellence?" Although the comment indicates that student needs may be a priority, toward the end of the second academic year of addressing the four established goals, members of the team indicated that the faculty seemed pleased to be reaching consensus and closure on the goal statements. Faculty statements indicated that some of the teachers were looking forward to the next academic year when these lengthy faculty meetings would not be necessary and all the goals had been addressed. The leadership stated their desire to establish an entire new set of goals to address the next year that would focus entirely on student needs.

Through the formal interviews, I discovered that the teachers were pleased that the entire faculty was able to collaborate and reach consensus on a set of goal statements, despite the content of those statements. The leadership team agreed that assembling the goal statements in a cooperative manner was one of the more positive notes regarding the process.

Administrative Expectations and Limitations

The central administrative office, particularly the superintendent, initiated actions that may have been intended to ameliorate the school-based management process, however, the results often created adverse affects for Valley School. The first action from central administration that created difficulty for the Valley leadership team was a request that each school develop a set of goal statements within a three month period. The leadership team felt that this would be a challenging task due to this type of time constraint.

Inquiries about the possibility of allowing more time to develop the goals elicited the following response from the principal, "We don't really have a choice, and besides, we must keep up with the other schools."

The message sent by central administration was that school-based management can be a standardized process with every school developing a mission statement and a set of accompanying goals within a relatively short time period. The leadership team at Valley was devastated by the thought of pushing the process because it had already consumed all of the school's in-service days and additional faculty meetings. To the team, no more time could be allotted to speed the process along.

Another hidden concern seemed to be the idea that there would be a Site-Based Management District Coordinating Council which would be made up of one representative of each leadership team from the fifteen schools in the district. The Valley team was concerned that it would become a bragging session, and they felt the heat of the competition long before the meeting was to be held. To accentuate that competition, the central office planned to publish an account of the progress and results that each school had accomplished by the end of the 1992 academic year.

The differences in views concerning perceived growth and responsibility in this governance change between Valley School and the central administration were beginning to unfold. The team believed in the beginning that they were to develop at their own pace and with the school's personal plans and interests in mind; but, they doubted their successes when they were forced to rush the process and compare themselves to other schools.

The limitations created by central administrative office extended into the domain of decision-making opportunities. As mentioned earlier, a general announcement delivered from the central administrative office early in the process of establishing goals indicated that faculty would not have the authority to propose or implement any major changes in current curricula. The announcement was a surprise to the leadership team who had expected to have at least some influence on curricular issues. This limitation by the administration fueled a decline in the level of faculty commitment and negatively affected trust in the school-based management process, as well as, administrative support for the changes.

Establishing Open Communication

The effectiveness of creating opportunities for improved communication among faculty was a strength of the process. Initially, moving the faculty meetings from the library to the art room immediately improved the climate of meetings. Teachers reported that when faculty meetings were held in the library, often some faculty members would congregate in the corners of the room and minimally participate. Teachers grouped themselves into factions that seldom agreed on important issues. The atmosphere created by the physical facility was an obstacle to improving the school's group dynamics.

As the leadership process began, the faculty meetings were moved into a smaller classroom and teachers were able to see each other. Communication was improved as the leadership team introduced the *hot seat* method of communicating that allowed every teacher to become directly involved in the discussions. The hot seat also prevented any teachers from monopolizing conversations. This was a strategy for communicating that the leadership team had used in the initial stages of the school-based leadership process. Having been given one of those survival activities (you're lost in the woods with two others with a limited set of hands and a long way to travel--which supplies should you take with you and why?) a large group of teachers were broken into smaller groups and had to come to consensus.

Once the smaller groups had made some decisions, a representative of each group was brought to the front. A total of five teachers, one representative from each small group, sat facing all of the other teachers to talk to each other in attempt to reach consensus about what to bring along for the long and perilous journey. No one in the audience could speak to the smaller group in front unless he/she sat in the *hot seat* which was a chair in

front of the group. With this design, if someone in the audience had an idea, it could be communicated to the team only by sitting on this seat.

The teachers on the leadership team at Valley successfully utilized it in developing their goals. In sorting through the responses from the magic beans, the team members attempted to elicit responses from the faculty. In communicating with the team, the faculty had agreed to follow the *hot seat* method. No one, thus, was allowed to monopolize the conversation or express his/her views more strongly than any other teacher. By placing the hot seat in front of the facilitator of the goal-setting process, responses were listened to by all and all were allowed to participate if they so chose. The team members themselves agreed to use it when they had concerns. This particular method of communicating existed throughout the duration of the meetings to initiate action plans.

Responses from formal interviews with teachers revealed that the leadership team was particularly pleased that so many teachers had become active members in the decisions that were addressed during faculty meetings. An improvement in listening to one another was mentioned as another advantage of the hot seat method of communicating concerns. Collaborating on the development of goals was mentioned as the most advantageous aspect of improved communications. Communication and a resultant increased level cooperation among faculty were mentioned as the most positive factors that the process of initiating school-based leadership had produced at Valley.

Discussion

One of my greatest concerns when I met to formally interview teachers and the principal was their beliefs about the definition of shared leadership. The

respondents consistently mentioned the words: *sharing responsibility, reaching consensus, sharing decision making, and creating a common bond.* Although the term *shared leadership* was not used by central administration, it was a common reference used by the leadership team. The teachers that were interviewed responded that the shared goals would not have been developed without the opportunities provided by the initiation of school-based management and the opportunities provided for sharing leadership.

The following are responses to the original research questions:

1) To what extent were teachers empowered?

This can only be answered by teachers themselves in relationship to their previous opportunities for empowerment. I believe that teachers saw themselves become empowered, but with certain limitations. The frustrations associated with little or no opportunities for decision-making concerning instructional and curricular issues is evidence that more authority was desired by some teachers. I believe, however, that only a few teachers at Valley were ready to become involved in influencing or altering decisions in the school-wide managerial or operational domain.

Glickman (1990) discussed the need for teachers to achieve a sense of readiness for leadership roles. He indicated that it may be ill-advised for schools to initiate empowerment if their faculties are reluctant to share such opportunities. I don't believe that a school would realize the level of interest until after becoming deeply involved in the process of governance change as it occurred at Valley.

Teachers in many settings choose not to become involved in crucial issues pertaining to school functioning (Kirby & Colbert, 1992). Again, in some instances, a lack of faith in the sincerity of the administration to grant

leadership opportunities prevents teachers from accepting greater roles in the process (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980). The teachers at Valley did believe that they had gained control over issues for which they had previously not been consulted, therefore, the view of relative participation existed at Valley. The additional decision-making opportunities are mentioned below under the third question.

2) *How did teachers react to greater opportunities for decision making?*

Speaking for the leadership team, I would have to say that they embraced these opportunities and handled them with greater confidence as time progressed. For other teachers, there was the concern and evidence that not all were willing or ready to accept leadership responsibilities. Part of that may be due to the lack of trust in administration and other teachers, and additionally, part may be due to the belief that shared leadership may be a passing fancy as have other proposed changes in education. Hallinger and Yanofsky (1990) reported that the success of procedures for sharing authority is unlikely to occur without the development of a level of trust. Fullan and Miles (1992) indicated in another study that a lack of commitment and mistrust may exist because most local educators experience many school reforms as mere passing fads.

An added reason that teachers refuse to accept more responsibility is the confusion that is created by a lack of clarity concerning the roles that teachers will play and the amount of authority that they may be granted (Lieberman, 1988). Teachers at Valley mentioned the problems with role confusion often during sessions and interviews. The principal also wavered on her role in the process change at Valley. Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth

(1991) provided findings that principals were often confused about who held responsibility for actions following the initiation of shared leadership. In addition, because these changes in leadership at Valley were mandated, it is likely to prevent teachers from becoming as quickly committed to such changes (McLaughlin, 1990).

3) What additional decisions, if any, were teachers allowed to make?

All of the teachers interviewed agreed that there had been a few positive effects on decision-making opportunities for all teachers due to the implementation of the process. The types of decisions reportedly altered as a result of the process were the following: alterations in discipline policies, designing school-wide goals, opportunities to affect grouping strategies, use of in-service days, and some scheduling decisions. A serious concern among the leadership team at Valley was the inability of the faculty to derive goals and take the initiative to impact decisions which addressed curricular and instructional issues. Foster (1991) reported similar concerns among faculty at a high school in California. As was the case within the Foster study, the teachers at Valley did not perceive curricular issues as paramount to meeting other more urgent needs. Kirby and Colbert (1992) recognized that teachers within a number of shared leadership environments focused on issues such as discipline, school calendars, scheduling, and use of space prior to considering curricular concerns. Sarason (1990) was surprised by the lack of connections made by teachers and principals between shared leadership structures and the opportunity to influence the instructional/learning process.

It will take some time for teachers at Valley to include instructional and curricular issues among their main concerns for change. The goals that

were developed at Valley were the priorities for most of these teachers and were viewed as presenting greater opportunities in decision making.

Respondents to the formal interview, however, indicated that they desired greater control over other key issues--issues such as testing and curriculum. I believe that other opportunities exist for greater control over instructional and curricular issues, despite the limits placed upon the faculty by the central administration office. These type of decisions may not take place until the faculty of Valley is able to initially address the more pressing concerns that developed throughout the year as the identified goals. Student-centered goals and decisions may not develop either until the faculty believes that they have some control over these central issues.

4) *What are the perceived successful aspects of school-based management?*

The most common response about the essential components of shared leadership that this school had effectively established as reported by respondents to the formal interview were the following characteristics:

open communication *working collaboratively*
establishing common goals *sharing decision making*

The success with which improved communication developed at Valley was the most positive aspect of the program. Boles (1989) discovered that teachers believed that improvements in communication were recognized by faculty as an essential component to the successful changes that ensued. Barth (1990) reminds us that it is the culture of schools that needs to be improved--that is, the quality of interpersonal relationships. That has occurred at Valley, and the teachers interviewed recognized this as valuable to their growth. It is a goal that leads to collegiality, and the opportunities for this exchange can

ultimately improve the professional atmosphere for teachers. One of the advantages of creating a collegial atmosphere is an improvement in trust among teachers and an increase in morale among colleagues (Barth, 1990).

The collaboration that had developed among teachers was crucial to reaching consensus on the established goals. Teachers were pleased that the faculty had accomplished this as a result of the school-based management project.

5) What were the perceived roadblocks that interfered with the successful implementation of school-based management?

In mentioning roadblocks to the successful implementation of the process, *time* was a main concern followed by these: fear among faculty and administrators; a lack of trust among teachers and between teachers and administrators; confusion concerning the roles that each party should play; overbearing control by central office administration; a concern that there were hidden agendas of the central office administrators; and lack of teacher support and positive attitudes toward the process. Within formal interviews, two factors were also revealed as creating frustration for some of the teachers: the inability of faculty to share expectations and values; and difficulty in developing a common purpose among faculty members.

In discussion of the year and a half of implementation of the project, the challenges faced by this faculty are similar to those encountered by other schools. It began with a lack of trust among faculty that was most likely promulgated through years of isolation. Boles (1989) indicated that teachers have generally valued the autonomy and individual freedom associated with traditional roles of teaching. Teachers in the Boles's study indicated that they missed working alone, and that they were not used to the compromises

required within a collaborative environment. One study described the lack of trust among teachers as a product of having a long history of grievances with one another and administrators (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1991). Without facing one another, which the teachers at Valley managed to do for so many years, teachers do not have to become involved with each other which prevents a level of trust from being developed.

The leadership team at Valley School lacked the resources, especially time, to develop a climate for change. Rushed by central office administration to develop goals within a short time frame created stress for the leadership team. Adding to the uncomfortable feelings associated with time was the comparison by central administration of each school site's progress toward established goals. These actions created a greater climate of distrust between Valley School and central administration.

6) *How would students' academic lives be altered as a result of this governance change?*

Teachers at Valley developed four goals for improvement based on initial belief statements and the magic bean activity. Only one goal may have affected students, the first one, stated *academic growth and success for all (with a focus on improving growth in mathematics and reading).* Discussions concerning this goal centered around how to appropriately group students for mathematics. Initially, questions arose concerning the authority that teachers at Valley would have over this issue. Once established that it was a decision within their domain, disagreements in views among the most appropriate method of grouping students for mathematics prevented the faculty from reaching any decision that they could all agree to accept. This

was the only action initiated by the faculty that directly addressed students' academic needs.

As mentioned earlier, the leadership team was disappointed in the priorities of the faculty as evidenced by the goals that were developed. Hopes that the faculty would eventually address student needs were held by both the principal and the leadership team. In the fall of the second academic year of the project, the leadership team intended to readdress the goal on academic growth and to develop additional goals that would be more focused on student needs.

Conclusion

The thought of shared leadership provides for many teachers a vision of more control of central issues of concern, opportunities for significant decision making, and the development of a more democratic environment. Throughout the short history of the implementation of school-based management at Valley Elementary School, the faculty has experienced a number of encouraging steps toward progress in a shared leadership environment as defined by the professional model of participation. The opportunities for continued change have been expanded due to the progress made throughout the past year.

Although each school establishes its own blueprint for change, there exist a number of similarities among the victories and frustrations at Valley and those at many other school sites. The ability to involve all of the teachers in meaningful debate concerning the growth of the school at Valley Elementary is a beginning step in promoting greater commitment toward improvement. The creative method of the hot seat that Valley has developed

for communicating with one another may become a model that other schools can utilize to improve their own face-to-face interactions. By designing opportunities for teacher interaction, the Valley faculty may have unlocked the heavy door that blocks the path of meaningful growth in schools.

Given the experiences that have occurred at Valley, there are a number of suggestions that may be proposed for school systems that will become engaged in a shared governance structure. It should be clear which model of participation the school or district intends to implement--will teachers be empowered to make both classroom and school-wide decisions as in the professional model, or will the school system adopt a more conservative model as characterized by the bureaucratic style in which teachers's decisions are employed to support previously determined administrative decisions? For central level administrators, I suggest that they explicit clarify the dimensions of leadership that may be shared. Administrators should indicate whether teachers will be merely influencing decisions that are typically reserved for administrative personnel or will have authority for decisions that affect the school and students. The domains of decisions should similarly be addressed prior to the initiation of a shared leadership environment--specify whether teachers will have a voice in technical and managerial domains of the school. Administrators should be cognizant of the need for each school to develop within its own time frame. The deep structural processes that can be affected by a governance change will not be altered quickly and cannot be moved along in a standardized fashion.

Suggestions for faculty include prior knowledge of the issues discussed above as listed for the administration, as well as, a number of other concerns. Improvement in school environments requires a commitment of all faculty.

Disinterest in assisting in a shared leadership environment has the capability of derailing the process for the school. Becoming involved in the commitment of change requires that faculty understand the need for developing a cooperative frame of mind that is not traditionally a characteristic of educators. Teachers must be willing to commit additional time as a major resource to improving schools and must come to realize that change is a slow and continuous process.

Those of us who believe in the process of teacher empowerment and greater decision-making opportunities for faculty have a responsibility to assist schools throughout their journeys. We, as well, need to inform pre-service teachers of a change in the expectations of the roles that teachers will play regarding leadership and decision making.

It is clear to me that the teachers at Valley have begun in earnest the journey that will lead them to improving the plight of their students in meeting their learning needs. Within a shared leadership environment, I believe that teachers can genuinely become professionals that contribute knowledge for improving learning environments for their students.

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